

Note: this document is an informal sketch of our long-term vision for GiveWell. The details of this vision are (a) expected to change significantly over time; (b) not formally approved by the Board of Directors. The intent of the document is to lay out a concrete sense of the general size and scope we’re ultimately aiming for, as well as the key variables that will both drive and reflect progress toward our vision.

“Steady-state” vision for GiveWell

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Summary

GiveWell’s ultimate vision is of a world in which:

- Individual donors can easily find actionable information about what charities do and whether it works.
- A large amount of money from these donors flows systematically to the charities with the most proven, cost-effective, scalable ways of helping people.
- This dynamic – charities competing for funding based on demonstrated impact – leads to an ongoing public dialogue about how to help people, and to constant improvement in the way charitable resources are allocated.

We believe we can bring this vision about if we can reach the state outlined in this document, in terms of the following key variables:

- **Depth, breadth, and presentation of research:** GiveWell will publish up-to-date research on seven broad causes: developing-world aid, disease research, global warming prevention/mitigation, equality of opportunity in the U.S., mitigation of suffering in the U.S., tolerance in the U.S., and animal welfare. It will recommend several charities per cause (including one for each subcause, outlined in the body of our vision document) and provides basic ratings for much larger numbers of charities.
- **Capacity and operating funding:** GiveWell will have a staff of about twenty, and operate on about \$1.7 million per year. Its staff will be sufficient to provide broad, deep research as well as maintaining an excellent website and active marketing efforts.
- **Money moved:** GiveWell will affect a large amount of money – at least \$15 million, 9 times operating costs – through a variety of methods outlined in the body of this document.
- **High-credibility/high-visibility supporters:** GiveWell will have a 10-person Board of Directors, composed primarily of major donors who are successful and well-connected in the for-profit world. It will also maintain a separate Advisory Board for each broad cause covered by its research, composed of 3-10 people with significant expertise in that particular area.
- **Brand value / name recognition:** GiveWell will occupy a place in annual coverage of giving similar to that currently occupied by Charity Navigator. It will be covered in multiple mainstream media pieces during giving season of each year. Its research will be frequently referenced and linked to in online blog posts and discussions of relevant issues.

Each of the above variables (depth/breadth/presentation of research; capacity and operating funding; money moved; high-credibility/high-visibility supporters; brand value / name recognition) has the potential to influence the others, and there are multiple paths we might take to get to our vision.

The path we are focused on now, outlined in a separate document, focuses for the short term on the depth, breadth, and presentation of our research; promoting our research and pursuing customers is a secondary priority until our research is substantially deeper and broader. We estimate that reaching the depth and breadth of research outlined in this document will take approximately 3-6 years and require \$1.5-2.5m in operating expenses.

Details

The product: depth, breadth, and presentation of research

Depth, breadth, and presentation of research: end goal

GiveWell will publish a report each year on each of the causes listed below.¹

- For each broad (first-order) cause, GiveWell will publish a review of literature on the most promising interventions.
- For each narrower (second-order) cause, GiveWell will publish a list of charities working in this area, along with the interventions they focus on, and will aim to recommend at least one charity within each second-order cause.
- Recommended charities will have more in-depth reviews than other listed charities; reviews will be similar to those currently at www.givewell.net and will include discussion of financials, monitoring & evaluation reports, and site visits.
- GiveWell will also publish some ratings system for **all** charities working in each area.

GiveWell's research will be available at several different levels of detail, putting recommendations and highlights up front for those with little time and linking to the full, referenced details for others. It will be presented as intuitively and engagingly as possible.

- 1) Developing-world aid
 - a) Direct health interventions
 - b) Advocacy for legislative health interventions (micronutrient fortification, tobacco taxes, highway safety, etc.)
 - c) Economic empowerment programs (microfinance, agricultural training, irrigation, etc.)
 - d) Targeted research on neglected developing-world-specific diseases (for example, development of vaccines for malaria and tuberculosis)
 - e) Care, support and adoption of OVC (orphans and vulnerable children)
 - f) Interventions targeted at child slavery and sex slavery
 - g) Primary and secondary education (scholarships, school building)
 - h) Disaster relief and reconstruction
- 2) Disease research: cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer's, diabetes, etc.
- 3) Global warming mitigation/prevention
 - a) Research on alternative energy
 - b) Research on improved prediction models
 - c) Advocacy for appropriate legislation (carbon tax, etc.)
 - d) Programs targeted at helping individuals reduce energy consumption
- 4) Equality of opportunity in the U.S.
 - a) Early childhood care
 - b) K-12 education
 - c) K-12 youth development (non-academic)
 - d) College preparation and scholarship programs
 - e) Employment assistance and training programs

¹ Note that the creation of the initial report – incorporating a review of academic research, search for relevant organizations, etc. – will be far more time-consuming than updating a report each year (which will require only reviewing new materials released both by academics and charities, as well as evaluating any new charities that apply).

- 5) Mitigation of suffering in the U.S.
 - a) Food, shelter, etc. for homeless and other extremely low-income people
 - b) Hospice care
 - c) Financial and other support of veterans, widows, and other non-self-supporting people
 - d) Financial and other support of OVC
 - e) Care of the mentally and physically disabled
- 6) Tolerance in the U.S.
 - a) Prevention/reduction of violence against women
 - b) Civil rights
 - c) Aid for immigrants
- 7) Animal welfare

Depth, breadth, and presentation of research: how we'll get to the end goal outlined above

Key variables are time and capacity/operating funding.

Our rough estimate that one “broad cause” should take approximately four “man-years” of Holden’s and Elie’s time. In our first year, the two of us covered three of the areas listed under “Equality of opportunity in the U.S.” as well as a preliminary analysis of developing-world health and economic empowerment. In our second year, we believe we will be able to cover about half of what we’ve listed above under developing-world aid.

This estimate could be overly optimistic because:

- We set regional restrictions for our first year; lifting these, and covering a broad range of regions, could lead to more work. We do not anticipate covering every city in the U.S. or every country in Africa, but we hope to cover a few different regions as well as recommending at least one large national/international organization.
- We hope to improve the quality (depth) of our recommendations, and in particular to get more personal exposure to the organizations and regions under review.

This estimate could be overly pessimistic because:

- We anticipate improving our efficiency as we learn from our experiences and develop improved approaches (as we have already done from year 1 to year 2).
- As our “money moved” and brand value grow, we anticipate getting more information, more easily, from charities.
- We also anticipate growing our volunteer corps and our ability to leverage them (something that has already happened from year 1 to year 2). We may also be able to pay particularly capable people, such as graduate students in relevant fields, part-time.

Assuming that the estimate is appropriate, that Holden and Elie will each be able to spend at least 50% of their time on research, and that associate researchers are at least 50% as productive as Holden and Elie, leads to the estimate that GiveWell should be able to cover **.5 + N/8 broad causes per year, where N is the number of new research staff hired.**

Depth, breadth, presentation of research: important milestones

Current status: we have relatively low-depth research (with heavy use of heuristics and very few recommended charities) on 1a, 1c, 4a, 4b, 4c.

Milestone: high-depth research of a single broad cause, with at least one recommended charity within each subcause. We are currently working on this goal for developing-world aid. Reaching it will likely not only improve our appeal to donors interested in this particular cause, but will give us a better sense of the time and resources necessary for deep research.

Milestone: low-depth research of all broad causes listed above, with at least one recommended charity for each broad cause. Reaching this milestone may improve our ability to pursue several different strategies for increasing “money moved,” particularly those for which *breadth* of research is key (see #2-4 under “Money moved” below). It may also improve our sense of the total amount of time and resources needed to reach our ultimate goal.

High-depth research for each of the above broad causes is a milestone that will improve the breadth of our appeal to donors.

Capacity and operating funding

Capacity and operating funding: end goal

GiveWell will employ:

- Two Co-Founders @ \$250,000 ea.
- One Marketing Director @ \$150,000
- One website specialist (full-time employee responsible for making our website as usable and engaging as possible) @ \$75,000
- Ten research associates @ \$50,000 ea.
- Five administrative/support associates @ \$35,000 ea.

All figures are inclusive of payroll taxes and benefits.

Other expenses will include:

- Expenses and auditing fees: \$15,000
- Subscriptions and research expenses: \$5,000

- Advertising/PR expenses: \$50,000
- Rent: \$16,000 per month
- Misc: \$15,000

Total expenses will be around \$1.7 million per year.

Capacity and operating funding: how we'll get to the end goal outlined above

The key variables in building this capacity are time and operating funding. Potential funders include:

- Foundations, such as Hewlett, Gates, Robert Wood Johnson, Packard, Skoll, Ford, Charles Stewart Mott, Knight, Kellogg, Koch
- Core individual donors, including
 - Former coworkers (~\$300k/yr)
 - Other individuals who have become extremely invested in our mission (have accounted for \$38,000 so far in 2008-09)

The following table gives examples of other organizations with a general mandate of serving the philanthropy sector, and funding from the foundations listed above.

| Organization | Full-time Staff | 2006 budget | Representative grants from foundations listed above |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|--|
| Center for Effective Philanthropy | 29 | \$2m | \$2m from RWJF in 2007; \$1m from Hewlett in 2007; \$500k from Irvine in 2008. |
| Guidestar | 20 to 100 | \$7m | \$750k each from Ford and Kellogg in 2006; 500k from Gates in 2007; 300k from Mott in 2007 |
| Network For Good | 11 to 20 | \$4m | \$1.3m from Kellogg in 2006 |

We expect that our ability to raise funding for the above expenses will hinge on our ability to demonstrate that the other aspects of this vision – namely, quality research that moves a significant amount of money – will accompany them. The key variables are thus the key indicators for the other aspects of this vision:

- Depth, breadth, and presentation quality of research
- High-credibility/high-visibility supporters
- Money moved

Capacity and operating funding: key milestones

Current status: 2 Co-Founders; no office; minimal expenses.

Each new hire, once integrated, will materially increase our capacity to move other key variables.

Money moved

Money moved: end goal

“Money moved” refers to the sum of (a) grants given directly by the GiveWell and (b) individual donations that are made to recommended charities, with the choice of charities directly attributable to GiveWell’s research.

We intend to maximize the “money moved” by GiveWell, but the minimum for continuing to operate will be 9 times its operating expenses, or approximately \$15 million. Sources of “money moved” will include the following; for each, the importance of each key variable is specified.

Money moved: how we’ll get to the end goal outlined above

1. Donations directly from www.givewell.net from donors specifically seeking its recommendations. Such donors will find GiveWell through:
 - a. Advertising targeted at potential customers (our current profile of a potential customer is someone who is between 24 and 40 and makes between \$100,000 and \$1,000,000 per year). **Key variables: operating funds available for advertising; depth, breadth, and presentation of research.**
 - b. Earned media – see “Brand value / name recognition” below.
2. Donations made through GiveWell’s partners: other websites aimed at raising and facilitating online giving, which will use GiveWell’s content for substantive recommendations. **Key variables: breadth and presentation of research; high-credibility/high-visibility supporters; brand value / name recognition.** Note that some partnerships should be possible at our current stage. Such websites include:
 - a. Websites focusing on financial data for charities
 1. GuideStar.org
 2. Charity Navigator
 3. Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance
 4. CharityWatch.org (American Institute of Philanthropy)
 - b. Donation sites
 1. NetworkForGood.org
 2. JustGive.org
 - c. Social networking charity sites
 1. Change.org
 2. SixDegrees.org
 3. YourCause.com

3. Partnerships with corporate giving and matching programs, which often (though every company is different) support and recommend particular charities. **Key variables: breadth, presentation of research; high-credibility/high-visibility supporters; brand value / name recognition.**
4. Partnerships with donor-advised funds (such as those run by Vanguard, Fidelity and Schwab), which represent pools of money that has been committed to charitable giving in general but not to any specific charity. **Key variables: breadth, presentation of research; high-credibility/high-visibility supporters; brand value / name recognition.**
5. Partnerships with individual wealth advisors. **Key variables: depth, breadth, presentation of research; high-credibility/high-visibility supporters; brand value / name recognition.**
6. Partnerships with fundraisers who focus on causes rather than organizations. **Key variables: depth of research, brand value.**
7. GiveWell Pledges and GiveWell Project Funding (explanation below) from donors who are highly committed to GiveWell. Donors will opt for these because of the extra recognition (from GiveWell) that comes with them as well as the added benefits from an altruistic perspective (detailed below). GiveWell will find donors to participate in these programs by:
 - a. Contacting those who have made major gifts through the website before (and have given consent to be contacted).
 - b. Arranging to speak at companies and conferences that are likely to have large numbers of potential customers. Target companies include those in the software, venture capital, and finance industries, all of which often have large numbers of relatively young people with relatively high disposable incomes.

Definitions:

- A GiveWell Pledge is a formal, advance commitment to give to one of our recommended charities from the *next* round of research in a given area. See <http://www.givewell.net/plan>
- GiveWell Project Funding is not currently offered, and may or may not be in the future. It represents the opportunity to commit a certain amount to fund a discrete project (not an unrestricted gift to an organization) recommended by GiveWell's research team. GiveWell will raise commitments for GiveWell Project Funding, list recommended projects, and then let donors who have committed funds rank the projects in their order of preference to determine which get funded. This setup will help donors to coordinate their funds and fund discrete projects, an ability that is currently generally restricted to larger funders.

Money moved: key milestones

Current status: The total “money moved” for our first year of research was approximately \$175,000. Our current research has about \$150,000 pledged to it (in the form of GiveWell Pledges as well as restricted donations); we expect the final “money

moved” figure to be higher, as having concrete recommendations will appeal to donors who weren’t willing to commit in advance. (Also, several donors have yet to specify numbers for their GiveWell Pledges).

Milestones: Reaching \$1 million, \$5 million, and \$10 million in money moved may have some impact on our general credibility, and on our ability to generate earned media.

High-credibility/high-visibility supporters

High-credibility/high-visibility supporters: end goal

GiveWell will have a 10-person Board of Directors, composed primarily of major donors who are successful and well-connected in the for-profit world. At least two slots will be held by people with significant experience in the nonprofit sector.

For *each* of the broad causes listed below, GiveWell will maintain a separate Advisory Board composed of 3-10 people with significant expertise in that particular area. Each Advisory Board will include people with both academic expertise (i.e., familiarity with the relevant literature) and on-the-ground expertise (i.e., significant personal experience with relevant nonprofit work, and the relevant regions and populations).

GiveWell will also seek the support – via GiveWell Pledges and endorsements – of as many other high-credibility/high-visibility people as possible.

High-credibility/high-visibility supporters: how we’ll get to the end goal outlined above

We will actively pursue relationships with potential Directors and Advisors. We expect that the case for their involvement will be strengthened by the following key variables:

- Money moved
- High-credibility/high-visibility supporters (this goal is self-reinforcing)
- Brand value / name recognition

High-credibility/high-visibility supporters: key milestones

Current status: our Board of Directors has 6 members, 2 of whom have substantial nonprofit sector experience and 2 of whom have substantial for-profit sector experience. We have two Advisory Board members; one is a relatively high-profile professor and another has a fairly strong resume in developing-world health, having been in charge of metrics and evaluation for both Partners in Health and the Millennium Villages Project.

Milestones: Each Board member or Advisory Board member recruited will be a minor milestone, improving our credibility and ability to reach more candidates.

Brand value / name recognition

Brand value / name recognition: end goal

GiveWell will occupy a place in annual coverage of giving similar to that currently occupied by Charity Navigator. It will be covered in multiple mainstream media pieces during giving season of each year. Its research will be frequently referenced and linked to in online blog posts and discussions of relevant issues (including, for example, education and foreign aid).

Brand value / name recognition: how we'll get to the end goal outlined above

We expect that the most promising avenues to earned media coverage will be:

- Cultivating relationships with members of the media. Key variables: time; progress on research (which will give us newsworthy findings to publish).
- High-credibility/high-visibility endorsers and supporters.
- Money moved.

We expect that the promising avenues to more frequent coverage from smaller online communities will be:

- Depth, breadth, presentation of research.
- High-credibility/high-visibility endorsers and supporters.